# Training videos alleviate 'phobias'

If you're interested in cutting software training costs and speeding up the process of training new employees, a low-cost series of videotapes for computer users deserves your consideration.

The Video Professor is a collection of 41 hour-long videotapes with training for beginner through advanced levels of DOS, WordPerfect, Lotus 123, dBASE, Macintosh Excel and other popular packages. The tapes each cost $29.95.

Do the tapes work? Are they fun to watch? And are they actually good enough to use in a business environment? Yes, to all three questions, at least based upon my review of a new tape for the word processing module of PFS:First Choice, the integrated word processor, spreadsheet and data-base program.

In the past, I also reviewed the Video Professor's advanced tape on WordPerfect and found it comparable to others costing many times the price.

Here are some of the advantages of software training with

**BUSINESS TOOLS**

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this series:

■ You pay for only the tapes you need, unlike other video sets that require you to purchase all or nothing.

■ You don't necessarily have to view the tapes while you're set up with your computer in front of the TV. The on-screen simulations of the program are so good that you can learn at home at your leisure.

■ The cost per tape are so low — in the range of one hour's cost for a live trainer — that they pay for themselves many times over in short order.

In addition, this series shares many of the advantages of other more-expensive videos: any number of employees can use it, the training is standardized, and users can view the tape as many times as they want.

A handy guide on the back of each tape's case tells you the footage count for the start of each topic covered. The PFS:First Choice tape started with Installation, and assumed very little prior knowledge of computers. The material was covered thoroughly and systematically.

This beginning level tape prepares the user to enter and save text, learn how to move the cursor effectively, edit a document, move and copy text, use "find and Replace" features, set indents, tabs, margins and style options, use the spell checker and thesaurus, and print a document. That's quite a lot for an hour's instruction.

On the downside, if a viewer still doesn't understand a certain part of the tape after reviewing it over and over, he or she is simply stuck — there's no live teacher to question.

And video instruction can't take into consideration the individual nature of a company's needs.

But for companies that currently rely on just the hard-to-under-

stand manuals that come with most software, the tapes are definitely a step up. And they are head-and-shoulders above the manuals for employees that have "computerphobia" to start with. Occasional parts of the tape are corny and amateurish, and they won't win any Academy awards, but they get the information across.

■ The Bottom Line: For inexpensive, standardized training in popular software, the Video Professor series can't be beat.

It could be especially productive where staff members are motivated enough to view the tapes at home, so that the business need not set up an in-house viewing room.

Video Professor is produced by Data Link Research Services Inc., 700 Kipling Blvd., Lakewood; 239-9950.

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*Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars, and books designed to enhance business productivity.*